AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claims 1-40 (Canceled).

Claim 41 (Currently amended). A method for enhancing secretion of heterologous exoprotein of interest, the method comprising expressing said heterologous exoprotein in a recombinant *Bacillus* cell, wherein the cell comprises a nucleic acid construct encoding the heterologous exoprotein of interest and:

a) a heterologous promoter operably linked with at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A (MrgA) protein with an amino acid sequence having at least 95% identity to the amino acid sequence show in SEQ ID NO:2; or

b) at least one heterologous gene encoding MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence which has at least 95% identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2, wherein the secretion of the heterologous exoprotein and MrgA is increased compared to an otherwise isogenic *Bacillus* cell without a) or b).

Claim 42-45 (Canceled).

Claim 46 (Currently amended). A method for producing a heterologous exoprotein of interest, comprising the steps of:

~~a)~~ cultivating a recombinant *Bacillus* cell, wherein the cell comprises a nucleic acid construct encoding the heterologous exoprotein of interest and:

a) a heterologous promoter operably linked with at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A (MrgA) protein with an amino acid sequence having at least 95% identity to the amino acid sequence show in SEQ ID NO:2~~;~~, or

b) at least one heterologous gene encoding MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence which has at least 95% identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2

; and

~~b)~~ recovering the ~~protein~~exoprotein, wherein the production of the exoprotein and MrgA is increased compared to an otherwise isogenic *Bacillus* cell without a) or b).

Claim 47 (Canceled).

Claim 48 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell is of a species chosen from the group consisting of *Bacillus alkalophilus, Bacillus amyloliquefaciens, Bacillus brevis, Bacillus circulans, Bacillus coagulans, Bacillus lautus, Bacillus lentus, Bacillus licheniformis, Bacillus stearothermophilus, Bacillus subtilis,* and *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Claim 49 (Canceled).

Claim 50 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein said exoprotein is a protease, a lipase, a cutinase, an amylase, a galactosidase, a pullulanase, a cellulase, a glucose isomerase, a protein disulphide isomerase, a CGT'ase (cyclodextrin gluconotransferase), a phytase, a glucose oxidase, a glucosyl transferase, lactase, bilirubin oxidase, a xylanase, an antigenic microbial or protozoan protein, a bacterial protein toxin, a microbial surface protein, or a viral protein.

Claim 51 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the MrgA protein comprises an amino acid sequence which is at least 97% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 52 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the MrgA protein comprises the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 53 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein comprising an amino acid sequence which is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 54 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein comprising the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 55 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide, which:

a) comprises a polynucleotide sequence which is at least 97% identical to the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1; or

b) hybridizes with the sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 1, under high stringency conditions.

Claim 56 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein transcribed from one or more heterologous and, optionally, artificial promoter.

Claim 57 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein integrated into the genome of the cell.

Claim 58 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a gene encoding the MrgA protein present on an extra-chromosomal construct.

Claim 59 (Canceled).

Claim 60 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the *Bacillus* cell is of a species chosen from the group consisting of *Bacillus alkalophilus, Bacillus amyloliquefaciens, Bacillus brevis, Bacillus circulans, Bacillus coagulans, Bacillus lautus, Bacillus lentus, Bacillus licheniformis, Bacillus stearothermophilus, Bacillus subtilis,* and *Bacillus thuringiensis*.

Claim 61 (Canceled).

Claim 62 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein said exoprotein is a protease, a lipase, a cutinase, an amylase, a galactosidase, a pullulanase, a cellulase, a glucose isomerase, a protein disulphide isomerase, a CGT'ase (cyclodextrin gluconotransferase), a phytase, a glucose oxidase, a glucosyl transferase, lactase, bilirubin

oxidase, a xylanase, an antigenic microbial or protozoan protein, a bacterial protein toxin, a microbial surface protein, or a viral protein.

Claim 63 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the MrgA protein comprises an amino acid sequence which is at least 97% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 64 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the MrgA protein or comprises the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 65 (Previously presented). A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one exogenous copy of a polynucleotide encoding MrgA protein comprising an amino acid sequence which is at least 95% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 66 (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A protein with an amino acid sequence having at least 99% identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2.

Claim 67 (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the MrgA protein comprises an amino acid sequence which is at least 99% identical to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 68 (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 41, wherein the *Bacillus* cell comprises at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A protein with an amino acid sequence consisting of the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2.

Claim 69 (Previously presented) A method in accordance with claim 46, wherein the MrgA protein consists of the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 70 (Currently amended) A method for producing a heterologous exoprotein of interest, comprising the steps of:

cultivating a recombinant *Bacillus* cell, wherein the cell comprises a nucleic acid construct encoding the heterologous exoprotein of interest and:

a) a heterologous promoter operably linked with at least one gene encoding metallo regulated gene A (MrgA) protein with an amino acid sequence having at least 95% identity to the amino acid sequence show in SEQ ID NO:2~~;~~ , or

b) at least one heterologous gene encoding MrgA protein with an amino acid sequence which has at least 95% identity to the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO:2

;; and

~~b)~~ recovering the exoprotein, wherein said exoprotein is a protease, a lipase, a cutinase, an amylase, ~~a galactosidase,~~ a pullulanase, a cellulase, a glucose isomerase, a protein disulphide isomerase, a CGT'ase (cyclodextrin gluconotransferase), a phytase, a glucose oxidase, a glucosyl transferase, lactase, bilirubin oxidase, a xylanase, an antigenic microbial or protozoan protein, a bacterial protein toxin, a microbial surface protein, or a viral protein wherein the production of the heterologous exoprotein and MrgA is increased compared to an otherwise isogenic *Bacillus* cell without a) or b)~~.~~.

Claim 71 (New) The method of claim 70, wherein the exoprotein is an amylase, protease, lipase or phytase.

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